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MUSICIAN

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McCartney Gets Hungry Again

With Elvis Costello his new writing partner, Paul reassesses his solo career.

By Timothy White

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FAREWELL TO THE

AFTER YEARS OF EFFORTLESS SUCCESS, PAUL McCARTNEY HAS TO WORK FOR A HIT.

BY TIMOTHY WHITE

"I RECENTLY took my kids Halloween trick or treating in America," says Paul McCartney, as he reclines in the darkwood-and-artwork-lined den of his London townhouse headquarters. "We went door-to-door to perfect strangers in a residential area around Los Angeles. I had on a black top hat and a big rubber mask that made me look like a ghoulish goofy."

No one guessed that the dad behind the false face was a rock legend, although a few gave him quizzical glances. "I did start off with me own brown bag, but the look I was getting off some people was, '*Here*, buddy, wait a minute. This *is* for kids!'"

The holiday season always makes McCartney feel wistful and vulnerable. It spells change, transition, the onrush of winter, the cold requisites of growth. He copes best by plunging into the next cycle, even if he must travel incognito. What bothered him most about the Halloween jaunt was the fact that he needed to be present at all.

"These days, I'm *not* sending the kids out there alone," he assures. "Because of the safety and security thing, a lot of people won't play trick or treat. Instead, a lot of doors just close, residents being very unwelcoming, Dobermans growling in the yards."

The world has changed since James Paul McCartney awoke to its vagaries on June 18, 1942, in Walton Hospital, Liverpool. The first son of sometime dance band pianist James McCartney and the former Mary Mohin, a visiting nurse, Paul led a blissful adolescence in the suburb of Allerton until his mother succumbed suddenly to cancer. He, brother Mike and their father pressed on despite the emotional devastation that often seized the parent. You do what you must, and Paul's fierce affection for skiffle music, Little Richard and the Everly Brothers soon led to professional feats that beggar superlatives.

He was a Beatle from 1960 to 1970, but his career as a solo artist has now spanned *two* decades, beginning with outside movie soundtrack work in 1967, and leaving the Beatles behind with the April 1970 release of *McCartney*. Now, with the appearance on both sides of the Atlantic of a two-record collection entitled *All The Best*, a 20-year drive for artistic autonomy has come to a close.

For the first decade-and-a-half of his post-Beatles career, everything Paul McCartney touched turned to gold. His critics said that such effortless success kept McCartney from pushing himself as hard as he should, but the public clearly loved the man *and* his music. Lately, though, the hits have not come so easily. His last several albums, *Pipes of Peace*, *Give My Regards to Broad Street*, (the final CBS LPs) and *Press to Play* (the first under a hefty new Capitol pact) met with a quiet commercial reception. The inner and outer pressure to demonstrate his viability in the rock landscape of the dawning 1990s is clearly mounting. "Paul's out there searching," says

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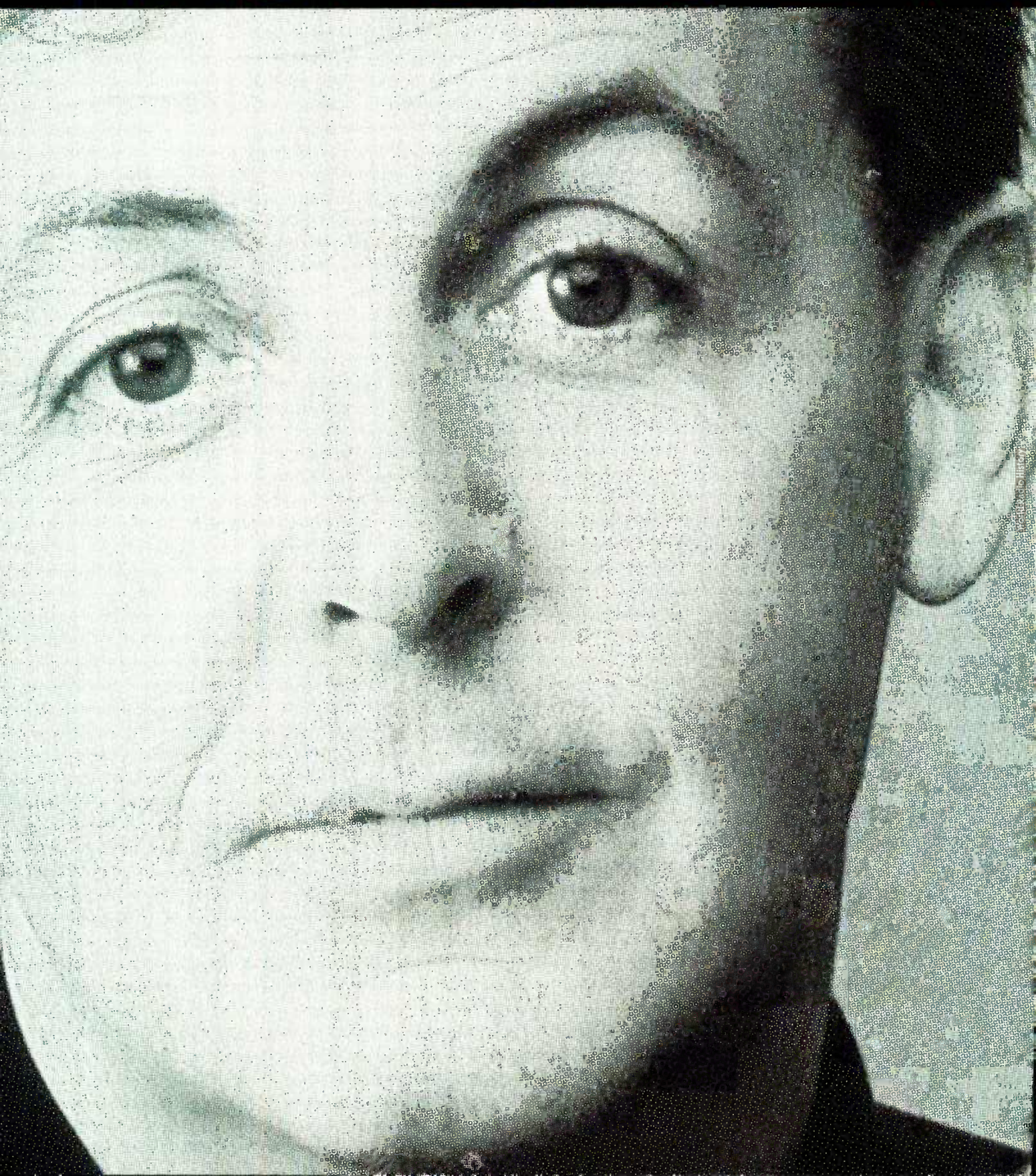
FIRST SOLO ERA.



"I started doing some writing with Elvis Costello. Rather than just jump in the deep end, he played me a couple of songs he had trouble finishing and said, 'Tell me what's wrong with these.'"

Capitol president Joe Smith, "and I told him to please don't be in a rush, because he's right where Paul Simon was before he came out with *Graceland*."

McCartney's already made his own African trek, returning in the early 1970s with the splendid *Band on the Run*. This time, he's seeking songwriting renewal through a grassroots generational alliance with another son of a Liverpudlian, Declan Patrick McManus, a.k.a. Elvis Costello. The immortal Lennon-McCartney epoch, as well as the McCartney-McCartney era of collaboration with wife Linda, could soon make way for McCartney-McManus.

"A fair bit of thought went into Paul's decision to approach Elvis Costello," says Richard Ogden, McCartney's personal manager. "Paul felt it was helpful that they had both an Irish heritage and Liverpool family roots in common. But one of the things Paul liked best about Elvis' songwriting was his strength as a lyricist. Paul sensed his own melodies and ideas could be excitingly compatible with Costello's literate style."

The possibilities inherent in this Anglo-Irish pairing of pop checks and petulant balances are provocative. The man who once had the good sense to recast a song called "Daisy Hawkins" as "Eleanor Rigby" now suspects he can learn something from the chap who retitled an album *This Year's Model* instead of *Little Hitler*. But come what may, the Paul McCartney anthologized on *All the Best* will never be quite the same again.

At 45, McCartney retains the features of a bantling, but a

"What's 'e got 'er onstage for?"

trace of soft wrinkles accents his sad eyes and frames his smile-bent lips. His character is like his complexion: supple but staunch, ruddy but unblemished. There is solidity in his natural air of openness, but a subtle fatigue from its cumulative toll.

What Paul has excelled at all his life is the ability to adapt, to match inexorable change with creative resolve. When something as sure as winter is approaching, he counters the seasonal shift with a chipper measure of control.

But the matter most on Paul's mind this bracing afternoon in London town is what the New Year will bring. After months of diplomacy, Paul McCartney finally agreed to confront the calendar of his later career, giving himself over—on the eve of an uncertain new chapter—to an unprecedented discussion of all that was and can never be. Listen to what the man said.

MUSICIAN: *This feels like a pivotal time in your career. And because it's never been done before, I'd love to examine your entire solo pilgrimage. The British version of* All the Best *has material not on the American collection. "Once Upon a Long Ago" is a track you did with producer Phil Ramone.*

MCCARTNEY: The English market, or so they tell me anyway, likes compilation things and "Hits" albums; they're very popular. Whereas in the States, even if it's something like Springsteen's live compilation, apparently they reckon the market isn't as keen on stuff like that. So over here people put your hits together and then put a new song on it for a bit of interest and added enjoyment. In America the record company was more concerned with just having the hits. I like the extra song, "Once Upon a Long Ago," but America for some reason didn't want it. Who am I to argue?

MUSICIAN: *The flip side of "Long Ago" is a track you wrote with Elvis Costello, "Back on My Feet."*

MCCARTNEY: I started doing some writing with Elvis—[*breaking into a brogue*] or Declan McManus, as 'is real name is; 'tis a real Irish name for a Liverpool lad. We originally said, "Well, look, let's not *tell* anyone we're working together, because if it doesn't work, we're gonna look like idiots." You do that; you get excited about a collaboration, and then nothing really comes of it. But we've now written quite a number of songs together, and this was the first.

How we started off writing together was that, rather than just jump in the deep end, he played me a couple of songs he'd been having trouble finishing, and said, "Tell me what's wrong with these." And then "Back on My Feet" was one where in *my* case, I wasn't totally happy with my lyrics, though I'd pretty much written it. So I fixed up his two songs, he fixed up this one of mine, and we were off and running. The next song we wrote from scratch, which was better yet!

There's now about nine of them that we've written together and some will show up on the next album. I'm not worried now about saying I'm writing with him because we're both quite happy with the standard of the work.

MUSICIAN: *Was there any contrast between the way you and Costello write? Does he write with a piano? A guitar?*

MCCARTNEY: I think he normally writes with guitar, but he's a bit like me and will do either. We wrote on guitar, mainly, with two where he played a bit of piano. You just ring the changes, really. The minute you get into a formula, you're *goosed*—it's the truth! So when we found one way of working, we'd say let's do another thing. We tried to keep each song different, because you fall into ruts easily. You think you've got the hang of something and you say to yourself, "Ah, we write upbeat numbers." So we'd say, "Okay, on the *next* one, let's try to write a soully ballad, or a rocker."

MUSICIAN: *Using* All the Best *as a guide to your post-Beatles body of work, let's talk about "Maybe I'm Amazed" and the rest of the 1970* McCartney *album. Rod Stewart and the Faces immediately made that song a feature of their live concerts and then formally covered it.*

MCCARTNEY: Oh yeah! It's *always* a compliment that some-

MICHAEL PUTLAND/LFI

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Wings over the world: A boy raised on Tin Can music.

body does your songs or likes them enough to put one in their act. The Faces liked that album and I remember a couple of the lads telling me later on that they'd been on tour when it came out and they'd got into what they called the "freshness" of it a lot. It was a great album to make, because I just made it in me living room with a four-track machine, and plugged into the back of it directly, without a mixing desk. I just got the noise right in front of the microphone like this—[*he repeatedly snaps his fingers*]—hearing then that, "No, that level's not too good," so I'd move off the mike a bit more. I'd physically adjust myself in the room rather than through a mixer.

It was a very *free* album for me to do, because I'd get up and think about breakfast and then wander into the living room to do a track. It's got that feel on it, and there's a lot of stuff that you, the listener, might have thought twice about, but I didn't. Like crazy little instrumentals like "Momma Miss America"; I like them when I hear them now, thinking, "Did I do that? Boy, that was cheeky!" Generally you wouldn't think I'd do an instrumental; McCartney things tend to always have a vocal.

It all was probably occasioned by Linda saying to idle me, "Come on, you know you play good guitar. *Play* it!" She always likes to hear me playing guitar, 'cause I don't really play much guitar, though I started off on rhythm guitar like everyone who came from that Beatles era. I've always admired people like Hendrix and I like playing nice *loud* electric guitar. It's one of my top thrills in life. So she encouraged that on that album. That's probably why certain instrumentals crept in that I might have saved otherwise for B-sides or throwaway things.

MUSICIAN: *Was "Maybe I'm Amazed" expressly for that record?*

MCCARTNEY: Yeah, that was very much a song of the period. When you're in love with someone—I mean, God it sounds soppy—but when you are in love and it's *new* like that, as it was for me and Linda with the Beatles breaking up, that was my feeling. Maybe I'm amazed at what's going on—maybe I'm not—but *maybe I am*. "Maybe I'm amazed at the way you pulled me out of time, hung me on the line." There were things that were happening at the time, and these phrases were my symbols for them. And other people seemed to understand.

MUSICIAN: *Another song on the album I liked was "Teddy Boy," which you had started writing back in the Beatles days. It took an image of adolescent street toughness and turned it into a lullaby.*

MCCARTNEY: That was the intention! And it *was* from the Beatles period. There was always a song that'd lie around for a coupla years with one good part and you'd mean to finish it one day. The words "teddy boy" to English people had always meant what you might have called a "hood" in America, a motorcycle-type guy. To us, it was these fellas in Edwardian long coats, a big fashion when I was growing up. I also have a cousin Ted, so he was the other meaning.

MUSICIAN: *Tell me about "Another Day," your first solo single in February of 1971.*

MCCARTNEY: Anyone who was around back then was bored with stories of the Beatles breakup, the business disputes, and all these negative things that were going on. It was really difficult to know what to do, 'cause you were either going to say, "Okay, I've been a Beatle, and now I'll go back to the sweet shoppe or do something else with my life." Or, "I'll try to continue in music!" But then the thought came, "Yeah, but you're gonna have to try and *top* the Beatles," and that's not an easy act to follow.

It was intimidating to even think of staying in the music business. But I had a talk with Linda. If she's a singer, she's very much a Shangri-Las type singer; I don't think any of them could get into opera, but I *prefer* them to opera. Linda wouldn't put herself up as a great vocalist, but she's got a great style—I think anyway.

So she just said, "If it's gonna be kinda casual and we're not gonna sweat it, we could maybe do something together." So we started it on that basis. [*Pause, sly grin*] Of course the critics didn't see it like that. They said, *"What's 'e got 'er onstage for?"* Between ourselves, it was, why not? What's the big deal? She's just singing with me, for Chrissake. She's not exactly taking over the lead in *La Traviata* or anything. It's just a bit of background harmonies here.

That was the kind of spirit we approached it all in, and it was the only way we *could* have done it, I say. If we'd have gotten too paranoid about it we wouldn't have even dared stay in the business! So we ended up in New York, and "Another Day" was one of the first tracks we released with that attitude.

MUSICIAN: *There was a hurtful controversy at first with Northern Songs Publishing about your material together....*

MCCARTNEY: Because nobody believed we'd written them! See, I had a contract with Northern Songs for me and John as writers. As I wasn't collaborating with John anymore, I looked

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for someone else to collaborate with.

I assumed that there wouldn't be any sweat, and I would say to Linda, "How do you like the words?" She'd say to change that little bit, only minor changes, but they were denying she was a co-writer when she had actually changed a few lines. But you can see what they thought: *"Hallo! He's pulling a fast one 'ere!"* And, in fact, they were so wonderful to me after all the success I'd brought them with me and John—more than they ever dreamed of earning anyway—they immediately slapped a million-dollar lawsuit on us here and in New York! So they were charming pals who shall be remembered ever thus.

MUSICIAN: *Listen, people do have a strong proprietary instinct towards the Beatles.*

MCCARTNEY: Well, I suppose it's like, what would you say if Mick [Jagger] brought Jerry Hall onstage? Now, I wouldn't mind—particularly if she could sing a bit. She looks all right to me. I think whatever artists wanna do is fine. Art is sufficiently broad that if you want to lie on the floor and wriggle like a

The rarest McCartney record: the Country Hams single "Walking in the Park with Eloise."

snake, that's art. Merce Cunningham's made a career out of it! But you wouldn't have passed any Royal Ballet School exams with that stuff.

MUSICIAN: *It is ironic that people had such a rigid perspective on Lennon-McCartney. They fail to realize that creativity is a very organic thing. You work with what's going on in your world.*

MCCARTNEY: Exactly. I said, "Well, look! If my wife is actually saying 'change that' or 'I like that better than that' then I'm using her as a collaborator." I mean, John never had any input on "The Long and Winding Road," and Yoko still collects royalties on it. You've gotta flow with these things.

The joke at that time was that Linda was the only one getting paid in our household, 'cause we were all held up with Apple being subject to litigation! I wasn't seeing *any* money. I was literally having to say to all the Wings members, "Don't worry, lads. One of these days we'll see some money." It was ridiculous! Every businessman who had ever known me was suing me. I felt, I'm damned if *she's* not gonna get paid for it; I'll put in a bill for her services! The money still came through. They weren't major checks, but they were the only checks we were seeing because she was the only one free of all contracts in our house.

The main thing about it all was that we managed to stay positive and keep the old Beatle philosophy when our heads were on the ground. 'Cause in early days with the Beatle music, no one wanted to know. We were up in Liverpool meeting the train every day and when Brian Epstein would come we'd say, "Have they signed us yet, Bri?" He said, "I'm sorry chaps, they don't want you." Between saying "bloody hell!" we had this little thing we always used to come out with, which was "Well, *something* will happen." It was real *dumb*—but it always worked! And me and Linda, we got over those lawsuits, because all things must pass, as the man said.

MUSICIAN: *You did the 1971 sessions for* Ram *in New York City, with the New York Philharmonic helping out.*

MCCARTNEY: Right, and then in L.A., too. We worked at the CBS studio and at Phil Ramone's old A&R Studios. We did "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey" there with the Philharmonic. I didn't realize they were so wonderful and revered. I thought they were just a bunch of guys. At one point Phil said, "Why don't you conduct them?" I hadn't actually written the score, but George Martin and I had talked about it, so I ended up doing it. One of the Philharmonic guys walked out during a moment when we all had to work a little later one evening. Phil managed to persuade everybody but this one guy who got humpy and took the hoof.

The Philharmonic types were always pulling that on the Beatles. We had the orchestra who played on "Hey Jude" in England in 1968 all together and said, "We've got this bit at the end of the song that goes, 'Na-na-na...,' and we'd like you to chant and clap along." A couple of them said [*haughtily*], "We're not clappers, we're fiddlers." "OOOOOO!" we said, "Off you go then, dearies!" [*laughter*] There's just some people who aren't up to that stuff.

MUSICIAN: *Was there an Uncle Albert who inspired that song?*

MCCARTNEY: I *had* an Uncle Albert; I was sort of thinking of him. He was an uncle who died when I was a kid, a good bloke who used to get drunk and stand on the table and read passages from the Bible, at which point people used to laugh. *A lot.* It was just one of those things—"Ohh, Albert, don't get up and read the Bible again! Shuttup! Sit down!!" But he's someone I recalled fondly, and when the song was coming it was like a nostalgic thing. "I think I'm gonna rain" was the wistful line, really, and I thought of him.

I say, I never can explain why I think of a particular person when I write. "We're so sorry, *Auntie Edna*"—you know, it could have been her. As for Admiral Halsey, he's one of yours, an American admiral. I could have gone, "Gen-e-ral Ei-sen-how-er," but it doesn't work as well. And then people say, "Ah-hah! I know why he used Halsey! In the Battle of Salaami in Nineteen-Forty-Hee-Hee he was instrumental in—" *None* of that sort of bit is hardly ever true. I use these things like a painter uses colors. I don't know where I got Halsey's name, but you read it in magazines and sometimes they just fall into your songs because they scan so well.

MUSICIAN: *"Girls School," the loopy, memorable rock track on the flip side of your huge "Mull of Kintyre" single, also came from some intriguing newspaper scanning, right?*

MCCARTNEY: True. It was from the porn ads, which I always *have* to check out—just to see what's going on. [*smirk*] I don't approve, of course. I just love all those titles of the girlie movies, they're so mad. There's a girl in the song called Roxanne, which came out of a porn movie, and because all the titles were very bizarre I jumbled them all together and made this idea of a kinky girls' school where all these people like

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"One minute you're in love, next minute you hate each other's guts. I don't think any of the Beatles really ever got to *that* point, but the business people were always pitting us against each other."

Roxanne and The Seductress would be characters, one of them being the teacher, another the head girl, and so on. There's a metal group called Girlschool, isn't there? I always wondered if they took it off that song!

MUSICIAN: *What was the origin of the name Wings, when you formed the band in 1971?*

MCCARTNEY: Linda and I were having our second baby. She was doing most of the work on that, I must admit, but I was there in attendance. It was a difficult pregnancy and I had to be with her a lot. I used to get a camp bed and kip in the hospital. When one of the matrons told me no, I couldn't sleep there, I said, "We're gonna use another hospital!" and we did, until we found one that'd have us.

So finally we were in Kings College Hospital and our baby was in intensive care. She's now a 16-year-old girl named Stella, so everything worked out great, but it was dodgy at the time. So rather than just sitting around twiddling my thumbs I was thinking of hopeful names for a new group, and somehow this uplifting idea of Wings came to me exactly at that time. It just sounded right.

MUSICIAN: Wild Life, *the debut Wings album of '71, was done in a pretty compressed span of time. The track that still stands out is "Dear Friend."*

MCCARTNEY: That was written for John—*to* John. It was like a letter. With the business pressures of the Beatles breaking up, it's like a marriage. One minute you're in love, next minute you hate each other's guts. I don't think any of us really ever got to the point where we *actually* hated each other's guts, but the business people involved were pitting us against each other, saying, "Paul's not much good, is he?" or "John's not all that good, heh, heh, heh."

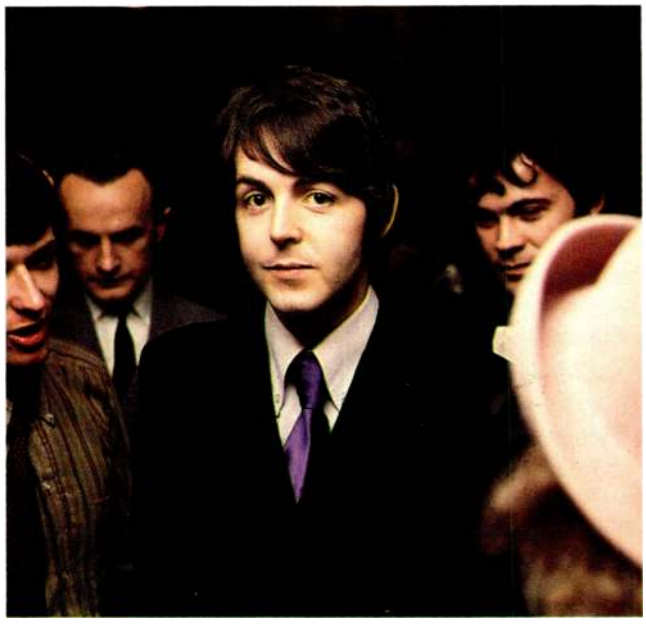
It's a pity because it's very difficult to cut through all that, and what can you do? You can't write a letter saying, "Dear pal of mine, I love you"—it's all a bit too much. So you do what we all seemed to do, which was write it in songs. I wrote "Dear Friend" as a kind of peace gesture.

No matter how much all the business was, whenever we did have a good phone conversation or anything, maybe one or two of those things, those gestures, got through. And luckily before John died we had got it back to that, thank the Lord, because otherwise it would have just been terrible. I would have brooded on the fact that we were always bitching with each other forever. We ended up with a good relationship, which was something. Some consolation.

MUSICIAN: *I think many were shocked, certainly over here, when the first Wings single in the U.K. was "Give Ireland Back to the Irish." It was written about the Bloody Sunday Irish massacre of January 1972 and I'm sure you sensed there would be a strong reaction to it.*

MCCARTNEY: Up till that point, whenever anyone said, "Are you into protest songs?" I'd say I liked Bob Dylan but I'm not. I didn't like political songs; such songs can be boring. Particularly if the thing being written about didn't happen in your country. I always vowed that I'll be the one who doesn't do political songs, but what happened over here was they had this massacre when some people had been doing a peaceful demonstration. Our soldiers, my country's army paratroopers, had gone in and had killed some people. So we were against the Irish; it was like being at war with them. And I'd grown up with this thing that the Irish are great, they're our mates, our *brothers*. We used to joke that Liverpool was the capital of Ireland, there's so many Irish living and working there. And if you didn't have that image, you certainly had the one of John Wayne as a "fair broth of a boy" in all those films where he goes back to the Auld Sod as the American cousin.

Suddenly we were killing our buddies, and I thought, "Wait a minute, this is *not* clever, and I wish to protest on behalf of us people." This action of our government was over the top! And in nobody's language could it be seen to be a good move, I don't think. I'm still shocked. And now we've reached the point where the IRA is just "terrorists." "We're the Goodies, they're the Terrorists!" No one seems to remember we nicked Ireland off 'em. That seems to have gone by the bar. Hey, fellas, we *robbed* their country! Is no one gonna remember that?!



McCartney and the businessmen: The Beatles publishing was lost forever.

I did that song and was rung up by a lot of people who said, "Please don't release this, we don't need this right now." And I said [*firmly*], "Yes we do. *Gotta* have it." It was number one in Ireland and, funnily enough, Spain! I can't quite work that out, unless it was the Basque separatists. Then I went to Austria and this sincere fellow comes up to me and says, "I've written a cover version, 'Give Bavaria Back to the Bavarians.'" [*chuckles*] You've gotta laugh. But seriously, it was something I had to do and I'm glad I did it.

MUSICIAN: *"Hi, Hi, Hi" was a single from the same year. I liked the energy in it.*

MCCARTNEY: I think "Hi, Hi" now is kinda dated. It's got words and phrases in it like "bootleg" and "we're gonna get high in the midday sun," and it's very much a song of the times when there were festivals and everyone had long hair, flared trousers and macramé jackets: very '60s. To me, that was my parting shot at those days.

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It got banned over here—a sex and drugs song; can't have it! There was the controversy over a supposed phrase in the song, "body gun." But in actual fact I had used a really mad word from a surrealist play by a man called Alfred Jarry, a French playwright who wrote around 1900. He was a real nutter who used to cycle around Paris on his bike, and he used to have this thing called the Pataphysical Society. It was nothing but a drinking club, but to be a Professor of Pataphysics sounds great. I used that term in "Maxwell's Silver Hammer"—"he studied Pataphysical."

At any rate, Jarry wrote this theater sketch called *Ubu-Roi*, which has this character Ubu, who's always going around worried about his "polyhedron." Which I think is actually a geometrical figure. So I put a line in "Hi, Hi, Hi" where I said, "Lie on the bed and get ready for my—" I wondered what should I put here, so I said, "polygon," which was another daft geometrical figure, all of this being influenced by Jarry. The people taking down the lyrics for us thought I said "body gun," which I thought was *better*. And that's the basis the song got banned on!

In Beatles days we used to throw saucy little things in, but most of it was stuff the critics made up, although when you read it, it seemed very feasible. That's how the times were anyway, all colored by acid and pot. Mainly those songs were very straightforward, but our image was so bizarre.

MUSICIAN: *Giving rise to things like the "Paul is dead" theories.*

MCCARTNEY: [*Nodding*] Like me walking across the crossing on Abbey Road [on the album cover] with no shoes on. The truth was, it was a hot day and I had sandals on, and I slipped 'em off for the photo session. That got blown up out of all proportion. I mean, there was a Volkswagen that happened to be parked in the street which had 28 IF [on the license plate, purportedly inferring Paul would have been 28 if he'd lived to see *Abbey Road*'s release]. That Volkswagen has just recently been sold for a fortune. But it meant *nothing*, you know.

So much of our music has been taken to mean *deep stuff*. We did throw one or two things in. When we were filming *Magical Mystery Tour* the Walrus head didn't fit John, who obviously wrote "I Am the Walrus," so I wore it. In "Glass Onion" on the White Album, John put in the line about "the Walrus was Paul," knowing that people were gonna search our lyrics for clues. What do you want from young lads, purity? You're not gonna get it. That's just the way we are, having a laugh that flowed into our lyrics. Your reputation walks ahead of you, and legends are created.

MUSICIAN: *"Live and Let Die" in 1973 was the most commercially successful James Bond theme up to that time. Interestingly, even before the* McCartney *LP, you did music in 1967 for a film called* The Family Way. *Do you like writing for movies?*

MCCARTNEY: *The Family Way* was quite a nice little British film, with Hayley Mills and her dad John. I like films and film music. Before rock 'n' roll you thought of your heroes as Cole Porter and Rodgers and Hammerstein, people from that generation. I've always thought of myself with the idea of a songwriter being someone who could turn his hand to this or that as a craftsman, rather than be stuck in one rock 'n' roll mode or ballad mode.

When I was asked to do a Bond film, I thought, "Why not?" I said, "Look, give me a week. If I can't do it, I'll back out of it." I don't normally write to titles, for instance. But I read the Bond book the next day, on a Saturday, because they hadn't finished the film, and I wrote the song on a Sunday. I was ready to go with George Martin the next week. I found it came easily.

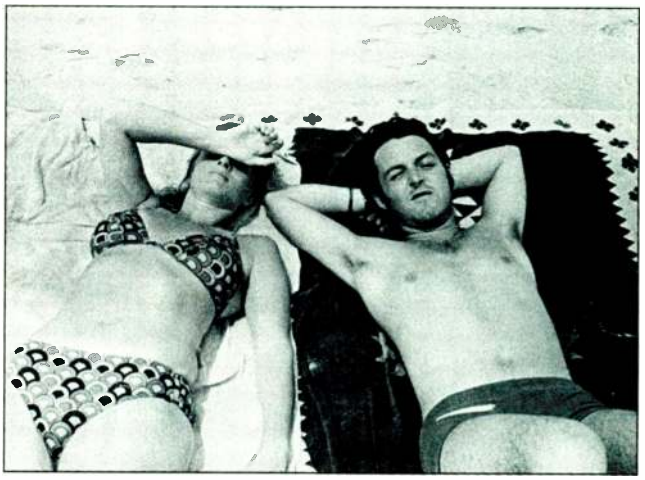
But when George took it to one of the producers, he said, "That's fine for the demo. When are you gonna record the real thing?" George said, "That's *it*, boys!" It was one of the best demos we ever made. But it was hard to do, the trick being how to combine my writing with the "Bondiness" of the soundtrack orchestration riffs. I'll tell you who liked that song, and I was always surprised: Neil Young! He told me, and I said I wouldn't have thought it'd be to his taste [*laughter*].

MUSICIAN: *Well, it's true that in most creative areas in order to succeed you've got to completely invent your job.*

MCCARTNEY: You've got to. And you do tend to listen to other people, but every time, honest, man, you think, "Why the hell did I?" When I made [the film *Give My Regards to*] *Broad Street* in 1984, I listened to *them*. About everything. See, I thought "they" knew.

MUSICIAN: *There are no infallible rocket scientists out there.*

MCCARTNEY: But you think there are, don't you? Particularly in movies. As a kid growing up you think there's a big man up at Twentieth Century Fox with white hair and he's gonna sort of bless you, my child, saying, "This is a good movie, and we're gonna put all our people on this one." It's not like that. And so, with humbling experience, you learn.



Hot as sun: Paul and Linda lay back and count her royalties.

MUSICIAN: *I wanted to ask about 1973's* Red Rose Speedway *LP, an interesting mix of ethereal love ballads and coarse rock, rosy fantasies and harsh realities.*

MCCARTNEY: Yes, and it wasn't named after Rose, my housekeeper, to debunk another myth. I remember the evening we did the album cover, Linda took that photo of me as I sat next to a motor bike with a rose in me mouth all evening, listening to *Innervisions*, Stevie's album. At one point while I had some of the tunes going, we were up in Scotland at my sheep farm—which all seems very lovely on the postcards, until you get to lambing. Of course a few of them die; it's life and death and a lot of farmers just don't want to get involved. They say, "Right," and just chuck them over the wall.

But you can't help it if you're a bit sensitive—particularly in a household full of children—and there was one lamb we were trying to save. The young ones get out into the weather and collapse from exposure; you find them and bring them in. We stayed up all night and had him in front of the stove, but it was too late and he just died. I wrote a song about it, "Little Lamb Dragonfly," and the line was "I can help you out, but I can't help you in." It was very sad, so I wrote my little tribute to him.

MUSICIAN: *For* Band on the Run, *how did you come to record in Lagos, Nigeria, in the autumn of 1973?*

GODLIS/RETNA

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"Mine is the 'old' style of bass playing, but people like it because it anchors the song. Jeff Beck said, 'Don't undervalue it, man.'"

MCCARTNEY: I'd written "Band on the Run," "Jet" and enough other songs to go into the recording phase, and I got this feeling that it would be boring to record in England. If you record in the same place all the time, music can become work, and you want it always to be play. I think you get the best results that way. We didn't all get into music for a job! We got into it to *avoid* a job, in truth—and get lots of girls.

I rang up EMI, my record company, and asked where else they'd got studios. The list included Rio de Janeiro, China and Lagos. I thought Lagos sounded *great*: Africa, rhythms, percussionists! On that basis, without knowing anything more about it, we went off.

They were building up the studio in this place called Apapa when we got there. They didn't use booths or separation barriers, so they were constructing booths just for us, and the guy was saying, "Do you want glass in them?" They were just gonna make big wooden things with holes in them! [*laughter*] We did a little work in Ginger Baker's ARC Studio as well, because there was a little political thing which we hadn't realized, in that Ginger was slightly in competition with EMI. I thought, we can't let old Ginger down, so we went and worked there too just to show no favoritism.

We got mugged out in Lagos. Linda and I were on foot, in the middle of darkest Africa, and we got mugged one night and they took all this stuff—a lot of tapes, the demos of the songs! We got to the studio the next day and the head guy there said, "You're lucky you didn't get killed! It's only 'cause you're white you didn't. They figure you won't recognize them."

You know, there were public executions in Lagos back then, before their oil boom. They had an execution one day on the beach! They just take this guy out, tie him to an oil drum, and go, "pop." And then they sell wooden souvenirs of the dead guy, little carvings. We said, "Er, we're not used to *this*, lads." The next day it was a beach again—"Hooray! Come and swim!" *Weird.* It was pretty different from all we expected. I anticipated great weather, and it was monsoon season, the sky peeing down all the time. [*laughs*] Great recording weather, though, great weather for being *in*doors. When we got back to England, we got a letter from the managing director of EMI, saying, "Dear Paul: Would not advise you going to Lagos, as there has just been an outbreak of cholera." *Ahhhh!!!!*

Still, out of the adversity came one of our better albums.

MUSICIAN: Band on the Run *was such a smash both sales-wise and critically, yet you were down to a trio at that point—only you, Linda and Denny Laine.*

MCCARTNEY: The night before we were due to go on the trip, two of the guys in Wings, the guitar player [Henry McCullough] and the drummer [Denny Seiwell], rang up and said they're not going. I said, "Thanks for letting us know..." Your jaw just hits the ground and you go, "Ohhh dear me."

They didn't want to come to Africa, got cold feet. Reduced to a trio, we went and did it like that. Actually it was good because it meant I could play drums—or that we were *stuck* with me as the drummer, depending on your outlook. I've just gotta be simple in my playing, because I can't *be* complicated. Fleetwood Mac-style is my kind of drumming: dead straight, right down the stropping!

MUSICIAN: *You've done some respectable drumming from* McCartney *onward.*

MCCARTNEY: The best compliment I got from that was when I was out in L.A. in 1974 visiting John when he was doing his *Pussy Cats* album with Nilsson, and they were having *one* wild time out there. It was boys on the rampage, that was. John and Nilsson, and Keith Moon was staying with them. What a crowd! But I remember Keith saying, "Say, who was that drummer on *Band on the Run*?" [*grinning*] That was the biggest accolade I could get. I mean, my favorite drummers are Ringo, Bonham and Keith. Moony had more flash, and Bonham was a *bit* more flash, but Ringo is right down the center, never overplays. We could never persuade Ringo to do a solo. The only thing we ever persuaded him to do was that rumble in "The End" on *Abbey Road.* He said [*sourly*], "I hate solos."

I agree with him. Those moments in a concert where everyone goes off for a drink and you're left with this drummer going *dabadubba dabadubba*, with lights flashing, are a total yawn. A quarter-of-an-hour later, the band return, out of their skulls [*laughter*] to play the last number, with the poor drummer left sober as a judge.

MUSICIAN: *Where'd you get the* Band on the Run *LP's prison break theme?*

MCCARTNEY: There were a lot of musicians at the time who'd come out of ordinary suburbs in the '60s and '70s and were getting busted. Bands like the Byrds, the Eagles—the mood amongst them was one of desperados. We were being outlawed for pot. It put us on the wrong side of the law. And our argument on the title song was, "Don't put us on the wrong side, you'll make us into criminals. We're *not* criminals, we don't want to be." We just would rather do this than hit the booze—which had been the traditional way to do it. We felt that this was a better move; we had all our theories.

So I just made up a story about people breaking out of prison. Structurally, that very tight little intro on "Band on the Run"—"Stuck inside these four walls"—led to a hole being blasted in the wall and we get the big orchestra and then we're off. We escape into the sun.

MUSICIAN: *"Helen Wheels" was written before Lagos.*

MCCARTNEY: "Helen Wheels" was my Land Rover. That song described a trip down the M6, which is the big motorway to get from Scotland down south to England. So that song was my attempt to try and put England on the map. All the Chuck Berry songs you ever heard always had things like "Birmingham, Alabama!" shouted out, these American places like "Tallahassie!" But you couldn't put the English ones in. It always sounded daft to us. "Scunthorpe!" "Warrington!" It doesn't sound as funky.

MUSICIAN: *You went down to Nashville in the summer of 1974 and did the "Junior's Farm" hit, "Sally G" and other things.*

MCCARTNEY: We went there mainly to get out of town and rehearse the new band lineup with a new guitarist [Jimmy McCulloch] and drummer [Geoff Britton]. We met up with quite a few local people: Johnny Cash, Chet Atkins. I sorta look up to Chet and certain people like that who're gents; not snobs but true gentlemen, or what I call toffs. One day, I was talking to Chet about a song my dad had written—the only song he ever wrote.

MUSICIAN: *You mean, "Walking in the Park with Eloise"?*

MCCARTNEY: Yes! Chet said, "It'd be really nice to make a record of that, Paul, for your dad." Chet got Floyd Cramer to

World Radio History

come along to play piano, Chet played guitar, I played bass—and then washboard, which had them in hysterics. And I named the band the Country Hams. I liked that Hams single.

MUSICIAN: *New Orleans was the next stop for Wings' recording jaunts, in the winter and spring of 1975. You did* Venus and Mars *at Allen Toussaint's studio. Do you have a favorite track from those sessions?*

MCCARTNEY: I would say "Listen to What the Man Said." I really liked what Tom Scott did on there with sax. We just went for it live. I also liked "Letting Go." And then there was "Medicine Jar," written by the late Wings guitarist Jimmy McCulloch and his friend Colin Allen from Stone the Crows. Jimmy wanted to write an anti-drug song. As to *why* he wanted to, I'm not sure, but I'd say he'd seen the personal warning signs. That song, I think, was Jimmy talking to himself. Listening to it now and knowing the circumstances of how he died, I'm sure that's what it is. He's really saying to himself, "Get your hand out of the medicine jar." I don't think he managed to. He was a great guitar player, but he was into a little too much heavy stuff. But if I'm reading too much into it, then let's just say I'm just as bad as the fucking critics, okay?

MUSICIAN: *I recall a portion of the '75-'76 Wings world tour when the stage lit up like an English music hall marquee, and you performed "You Gave Me the Answer." There is that strong song-and-dance music-hall tradition in your material.*

MCCARTNEY: See, what you've got to remember is that when people of my generation were growing up, rock 'n' roll hadn't been invented yet. Blues had started, but that was nowhere near as popular; you had to be a real folkie to be into blues. Anything up to the 1950s was the old traditions, and in Britain that was music hall, or vaudeville as you call it. My dad, sitting around the house tapping out things like "Chicago" on the ivories, used to get told off by his dad for playing what his dad called "tin can music."

MUSICIAN: *Come clean, what was the intention behind that oddball* Thrillington *album, that lush instrumental version of* Ram *that you issued in April 1977?*

MCCARTNEY: Well, you always see these albums like *James Last Does Tchaikovsky* or *Nelson Riddle Plays Mantovani.* I thought it'd be amusing to have your own tunes from an album and take them to the middle of the road as a mischievous way to infiltrate the light TV programs and things that use such fluff. It was another silly idea along the way, but we scoured the world for orchestra leader Percy "Thrills" Thrillington. [*winks*] Finally found him in Ireland! He and a friend of his did some arrangements and laid this album. Now, I think it should all have been done up *louder!*

MUSICIAN: *The 1979 Concerts for the People of Kampuchea that you sponsored with the U.N. were a pre-Live Aid benefit.*

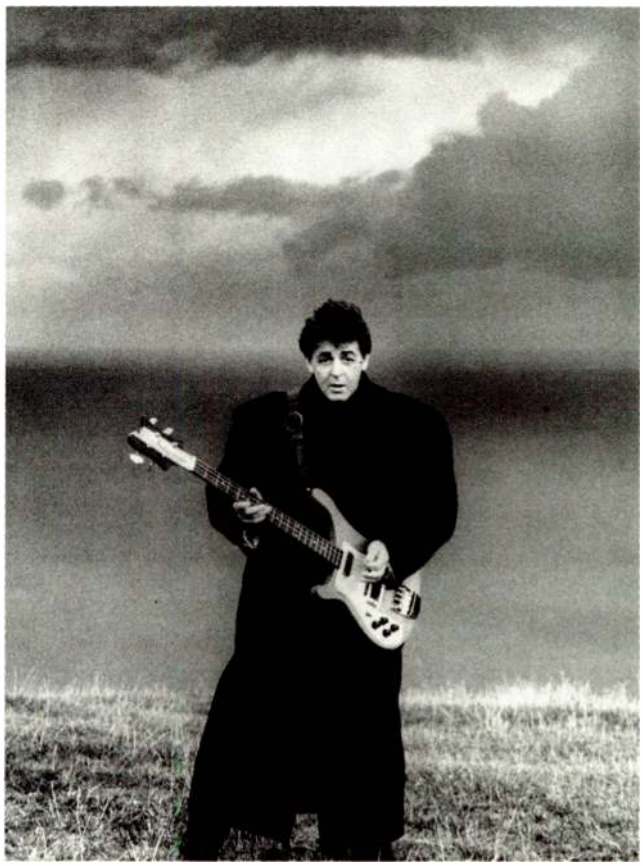
MCCARTNEY: That was an early one, yeah, but it was a much smaller event. I think that show was the last thing we did with Wings, and a lot of it was the fault of the monitors onstage, because if you can't hear yourself you think you've done a terrible show. My bass sounded like a *squeak.* It gave me the cold sweats.

But historically, George's Bangla Desh show was the real forerunner of ideas like Live Aid—which was great too, fabulous. It was nice to see the music guys that you thought were just wallys being so concerned. It's become quite a thing now, with the Amnesty International concerts centering attention. Often you find your musicians do more good than your bloody government does. Certainly on Live Aid, they did.

MUSICIAN: *Had you gone into "Goodnight Tonight" intending to create a contemporary dance track?*

MCCARTNEY: That's what it was. I like dance tracks, and if I go to a club there's no point in hearing ballads all night. You need something to get you up on the floor, and I'm into a lot of that stuff. We recorded it in a long version, as opposed to stretching it like they do now. I think I got fed up with the remix mechanizing, the dub stuff; I think it'll date very quickly.

It's not that I'm following the crowd, but if there's a lot of people into a thing I generally check it out to see why they all like it. When reggae came out and all the skinheads in England bought the great early *Tighten Up* albums in the late 1960s, early 1970s, that was the first time I'd heard of it, but I learned of it *through* the skinheads' interest. It's like rap now. There's some people that I really like: Eric B & Rakim, and B Fats.



Drafted into being a bassist, McCartney was a huge influence on rock bottom.

PAUL COX

MUSICIAN: *You did* McCartney II, *your second completely solo LP, in the summer of 1979. How different do you see that from the first* McCartney*?*

MCCARTNEY: The second one seemed less sophisticated in my mind. I don't know whether it is or not. The second one was done not with all the home comforts of the first, but in a derelict farmhouse in the countryside in southern England that was about to be knocked down. I recorded in what had been the front parlor, with a tape machine, a couple of sequencers, and some amps, bass, guitar and drums.

The overriding memory of making that album was that I did some songs in their original versions in about 10 minutes. Then I'd have to go back and add, say, the maraca part for 10 minutes, too. Bloody hell! I'm alone in the middle of the country and it took, like, *self-hypnosis* to keep going shaking the maracas like a baby after about eight fucking minutes!

For "Coming Up," I believe I heard something on the radio

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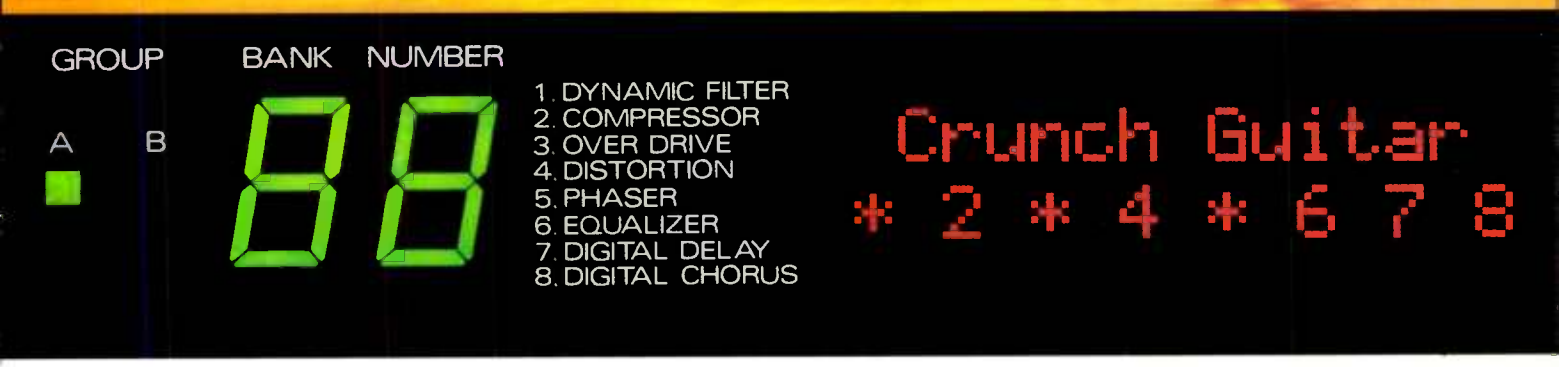

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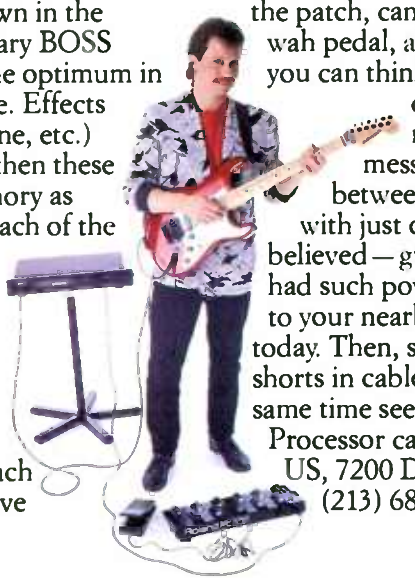

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by Sly Stone or Sister Sledge; it was pre-Prince, for certain, and the song I heard might even have been "We Are Family." But I went into the tape machine with that vibe and began to make something up around my own groove. The sax sounds on it are Mellotrons sped up like tight little munchkins. "Temporary Secretary" I also liked. The story behind it was sex, I suppose, [*chuckle*] but that's always the story.

MUSICIAN: *Which albums did you spend the most time making?*

MCCARTNEY: I think *Tug of War,* from 1980 to '82, and then *Pipes of Peace.* I was working with George Martin at the AIR London and Montserrat studios. We took a *lot* of time on those two albums. In fact, we took so much time, when I saw the bill for it all I thought, "I could have made an entire studio for this!" And that's in fact why I've since made my own new studio. As for the songs on those two albums, I favor the title tracks. "Pipes of Peace" has a solid mood to it, an undercurrent that grabs you, and "Tug of War" worked as a commentary on my career thus far, an accurate summing up.

MUSICIAN: Press to Play *in '86 was your last new studio album, arriving three years after* Pipes of Peace. *The standout tune was its title single, "Press."*

MCCARTNEY: That was what Jerry Marotta used to call the "Massage Song." [*sly smile*] That *was* the inspiration. Everybody loves a massage, touching each other. I like the groove but the lyrics leave a little to be desired. And the line, "Oklahoma was never like this!"—no one ever understood that line. It meant a lot to me, either referring to the boonies, the sticks, or to the old movie itself, where the "corn is as high as an elephant's eye" was never like *this* song.

MUSICIAN: *Michael Jackson's recent surprise purchase of the ATV Music company that controls your song catalogue remains rather shocking. As our talk here makes plain, you've been incredibly prolific, but this shrewd incident sealed the only chance you might have ever had to own your own musical offspring.*

MCCARTNEY: [*Grim*] Here's what I really think. When John and I came down from Liverpool we didn't know anything about songs, didn't know what a copyright was—and no one was about to explain it to us, either. They *saw* us coming. There were big, big grins on their faces when these guys who were good writers turned up and said, "I don't know, doesn't everyone own songs?" They said, "Yes, step this way. Come into my parlor," as the spider to the fly.

We were very naive and I think it was fair enough to take advantage of that, since young writers will do anything to get published. But after you've made millions, and after, let's say, a decent period of three years, I think it would be nice if you could go back to them and say, "This is a slave deal. Let's change it."

John and I ended up with the first deal that we had in the beginning, which was that the publisher automatically took the copyright. So we never saw anything. I think that was the unfairness. These days, kids see half of the copyrights if they're lucky and they've got tough lawyers.

They came to us originally and said, "We're gonna make you your *own* company." Me and John went, "Wow!" In actual fact, it was *their* company within a company, and they kept 51 percent for themselves and gave us 49 with no control anyway. It was all a fake. Then when we went to India with the Maharishi, Dick James, who held the publishing, sold it behind our backs. So we were well and truly screwed. And the guy who bought it next was Lew Grade.

But it's not so much the financial thing. "Yesterday," for example, I wrote on my own; here's this Liverpool kid falling out of bed and writing "Yesterday." I took it to the guys in the band and they said, "There's no point in drumming or playing anything on that. You just be on the record on your own." Then I take it to my publishers. They say, "Great, that's a Lennon-McCartney." I said, "Wait a minute. Couldn't it be a McCartney and Lennon?" "No, no, no."

The Beatles catalogue was thereafter bought from Lew Grade by an Australian, Robert Holmes à Court. And *then*

ALL THE BASS

Even avid fans tend to forget that guitarist Paul McCartney took up the bass out of a sense of duty rather than desire. His epochal instrumental segue occurred in June 1961, as the Beatles, on their third trip to Hamburg, were wrapping up a three-month stint at the Top Ten Club. Short-lived Beatle bassist Stuart Sutcliffe, known for his enigmatic stage manner (he played with his back to the German tipplers to hide his very modest skills), suddenly declined to return with his scruffy mates to Liverpool, lingering instead with fiancee Astrid Kirchherr to enroll in the Hamburg Academy of Art.

"So with Stuart staying in Hamburg," McCartney explains, "I became the bass player—I kinda drew the short straw and got lumbered with bass. It was not really the instrument people liked to play in those days; you wanted to be a big guitarist.

"I got myself the little Hofner violin bass because it was symmetrical for left-handed playing, meaning if you turned it upside down it still looked alright. I worked with that and in the beginning I was doing what everyone else in bands did, which was basically rooting the songs with bass. Then 'round about the year before *Sgt. Pepper,* Rickenbacker gave me a new bass and I started to record with that. On the *Pepper* stuff I got into the more melodic basslines. In fact, some of the best-paced bass playing I ever did was at that time, but more recently I can say that 'Goodnight Tonight' has got quite a good bassline, and the bass underpins 'Silly Love Songs' quite nicely.

"Really, my stuff is the 'old' style of bass playing, because I didn't make the leap into thwacking with the thumb. I do a little bit of the thumb trip, but it's not really what I'm into. A lot of the young guys now, that is where they *start* with bass. It's something I tend to leave to others—having worked with Stanley Clarke, for example, who's done that for me.

"A lot of guitar players and singers like the old style of bass because it *anchors* the song. I was talking to Jeff Beck, who likes my style for that kind of thing, and he said, 'Don't undervalue it, man, just because these other people are into their percussive stuff.' Whereas when you've got all that percussion-style bass within the rhythm, it can be everything but the kitchen sink and yet there's still no bottom. There's no *ass* down there!"

McCartney's approach could be termed a foundation style, since most of his songwriting, especially in his modern solo/Wings eras, sounds as if it's been built from the bassline upwards. Would he agree? "Yes. I think that's the main thing, and I'm still into that foundation vibe, really. I prefer bass that's impressive not percussively but *musically,* where it's more a melody thing than the actual style of playing. I'm not really into a million notes a minute. It's more important to me what notes are played, and what they do to the song.

"Bassists tend to use the root note, so if you're in 'A' they're playing 'A.' But my inspirations are people like Brian Wilson on *Pet Sounds,* because he always puts an odd note against the chord. For instance, if he's in 'A,' he'll often play an 'E' as the bass, which sort of stands the song on its head, and for certain sections that's great. I did stuff like that as early as 'Michelle.'"

Does Paul still automatically assume the bass role in his recording? "I went through a period where I let other people play bass on my records, but I prefer playing it for the studio work I'm currently doing. I'm using a Fender Jazz of medium age at the moment, 'cause it just records great. But, listen, I'm not one of those fellows who talks on and on about certain amps and things. I went into some shop in America recently and this guy at the counter said, 'Hey, I'm a bass player! What kind of strings do you use?' I said [*confidingly*], 'Oh, I prefer those shiny ones!'"

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Michael came along. Michael rang me up way back in the late 1970s and I said, "What do you want?" He said, "I want to make some hits!" I said, "Great, come on over."

He did, and he was keen to do stuff, so I wrote "Girlfriend" for him, which I did later on *London Town*. Then we wrote "Say Say Say" and "The Man" together, and then he wrote "The Girl Is Mine." It was fun and he was a nice guy to work with and everything. But it always used to keep coming up that he'd say, "Paul, I *need* some advice." I'd give him that advice and say, "Look, get good financial people, people you can trust." I took him under my wing and we'd always be in little corridors discussing this stuff. I thought it was just fine, but he used to do this little joke; he'd say, [*mimicking Jackson's meek tone*] "I'm gonna buy your publishing, ya know."

I'd go, "Ha! Good one, kid!" Then one day I get phoned up and they said, "He's just bought your stuff!" I thought, "Oh, you *are* kidding." But that was it, really. He had the money to buy it; he was rolling in it after *Thriller* and had it to burn.

As you say, I could have bought it, but in actual fact there were complications with Yoko which prevented me from getting it. That's a whole other story. Anyway, Michael's got it, and all's fair in love, war and business, I suppose. But it's a little galling *now* to find that I own less of "Yesterday" than Michael Jackson! It's a thorn in my side, and I keep thinking I should phone him up.

[*Grinning fiercely*] I don't hold a grudge, but if you're listening, Michael, I'll have "Yesterday" and "Here, There and Everywhere" back—just for a laugh—and a couple of others.

MUSICIAN: *So the legal and aesthetic disputes over the commercial exploitation of the Beatles catalogue continue to grow hotter. But you're the custodian of Buddy Holly's songs.*

MCCARTNEY: It's very difficult, because I do feel differently in both cases. As far as the Beatles' stuff is concerned, in actual fact what has happened is some people have used it without the *right* to use it. People who haven't got the right have been giving away the right. So it's a different affair than with the Buddy Holly stuff, where I do have the right to let people use it because we're the publishers of that.

But the most difficult question is whether you *should* use songs for commercials. I haven't made up my mind. The other day I saw "Something," George's song, in a car ad, and I thought, "Ewww, yuck! That's in bad taste." Earlier I saw "Twist and Shout" in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, which I liked as a film, but they'd overdubbed some lousy brass on the stuff! If it had needed brass, we'd have stuck it on it ourselves.

Generally, I don't like it, particularly with the Beatles stuff. When 20 more years have passed, maybe we'll move into the realm where it's okay to do it. That's a little bit why I feel it's not so bad with Buddy. There may be people out there who say you shouldn't do it with Buddy. I've done it once or twice with him, but I don't really like doing it, I must admit.

One thing I can't do with Buddy is ask him. One thing they can do with us, since there're still three of us alive, is ask *us*. That'd be a good move, to say, "Do you fancy being a car ad?" And we'd say, "No."

Yet you get your advisors saying, "So you're gonna turn down all that money, are you?" If I was being a purist, I'd say no one should give the songs to ads. My *heart* says that. [*pause, eyes downcast*] But, you know, you're not always as pure as you think. ■

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